

The Carbon Tax Boondoggle



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Well, here we go again. Heather Stefanson is back on the carbon tax bandwagon arguing that her government will get us out of a federal tax designed to reduce fossil fuel emissions. And she's doing it with a hefty dose of fearmongering that plays on voter anxiety about inflation and rising costs.

So, how much does the federal carbon tax actually cost us? Turns out the cost is next to nothing, because 90% of the tax you pay is returned to you via a federal tax rebate cheque, while the remaining 10% helps businesses and communities reduce their carbon footprint.

It is not, therefore, as PC candidate Kathleen Cook recently observed, a federal "cash grab." Nor is it adding much to the financial burden Manitobans are facing as a result of inflation.

So why is Heather Stefanson prepared to contest the carbon tax if re-elected?

Funny you should ask, because I think it's time to remind Manitobans that the conservative party already took the Feds to court over the carbon tax and lost their case in 2021, after a long

and costly two year battle. During that court battle, Manitoba lawyers argued that the Feds had no right to impose a carbon pricing plan where an equally effective plan already existed.

In his ruling, the federal court judge indicated that a carbon tax was well within Ottawa's statutory purview. He also pointed out that a Manitoba carbon tax had not even been enacted when the court case commenced, and worse, that the province's case relied on misreading its own evidence which, by his reckoning, would fail to reduce emissions as effectively as the Federal carbon tax.

So what is really going on here? Well, from where I sit, it's subterfuge, plain and simple. In fact, railing against the carbon tax seems designed to hide the fact that other recent announcements by the conservatives will either maintain, or more likely, increase Manitoba's greenhouse gas emissions.

Take the plan to continue buying the natural gas utilized by Manitoba businesses, industry and consumers, at a whopping \$2 billion per year. 50% of our homes, for example, are still being heated with natural gas and recently approved provincial building codes won't change that.

This in a province that's buzzing with enough green hydroelectric energy to power all of our industries, businesses and homes, if we had the right infrastructure.

Instead of building that infrastructure, Stefanson maintains that switching to sustainable energy is simply too costly for us poor Manitobans, who must, presumably, continue to huddle in our gas heated homes, which by her account, appears to be the only heating source sufficiently cheap and efficient to sustain us through our long cold winters.

Well, I've got news for Stefanson. My home is heated with electricity which works just fine, thank-you, and actually costs me less in the long run. And given the amount of hydroelectric power we produce, plus the savings to be made by *not* importing natural gas, I fail to see how financing the switch to sustainable energy could possibly be too costly.

We might even have enough money to offer incentives to buy electric cars to the more than 85% of Manitobans who buy gas fueled vehicles.

Sadly, that likely won't happen. Instead, if elected, the Manitoba conservatives will spend \$6.7 million on a feasibility study to build a new northern port and pipeline to serve the Alberta and Saskatchewan fossil fuel and potash industry.

No wonder Stefanson is attacking the federal carbon tax. If all her proposed plans are adopted our emissions will continue to rise as will the amount the province pays in federal carbon taxes.

What she fails to recognize is this – by serving the fossil fuel industry and failing switch to sustainable energy, those “plans” will wind up costing a whole lot more than any carbon tax. And we'll all pay the price.

Because, just in case Ms. Stefanson hasn't noticed, the world is in the midst of a climate crisis caused by the fossil fuel emissions the conservative party seems so intent on increasing.

Take Premier Moe in Saskatchewan who recently proclaimed that his citizens would not huddle in the "dark and the cold" to reach the federal goal of net zero emissions by 2050.

Really? Then I guess neither Mr. Moe nor Ms. Stefanson have paused to consider that we may all wind up huddled in the cold and dark if climate-driven fires, droughts, floods and extreme storms continue to escalate.

Bottom line? - don't be fooled by any conservative who claims that by protecting the interests of the fossil fuel industry, they're also protecting you. Tell them you're smarter than that and vote accordingly.

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